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quality of keen austere beauty, it is because the minds of the poets who used that language were habitually toned to a higher level both of intensity and of nobility than ours. It is a finer language because it expresses the minds of finer men. By "finer men" I do not necessarily mean men who behaved better, either by our standards or by their

own; I mean men to whom the fine things of the world, sunrise and sea and stars and the love of man for man, and strife and the facing of evil for the sake of good, and even common things like meat and drink, and evil things like hate and terrors, had, as it were, a keener edge than they have for us and roused a swifter and a nobler reaction.

Gilbert Murray

To be continued

TEN CENTURIES OF RUSSIAN ART

By PROFESSOR FRANCIS HAFFKINE SNOW, U. S. Naval Academy

I

THE importance of the study of Russian art in America is best known to those who have been able to follow the vagaries of foreign, and even Russian criticism in this domain. No art has engendered so many contradictory and sweeping opinions; no art has been more superficially considered. This is due to a multiplicity of causes—such, for example, as the violent reforms of Peter the Great, creating a chasm between Russian Art before and after Peter; the long reign thereby ushered in of Western European pseudo-classicism: the subsequent blind and passionate subservience of Art in Russia herself to the purposes of propaganda and didaxis: the inner conflict in the modern Russian soul between Occidental and Oriental traditions: the visionary and extreme views of Russian ideologists; the deep ignorance abroad of the complexity of the phenomena; the ignoring of the culture-historical fundamentals without which I believe no reliable criteria can be established.

The results of insufficient knowledge and, above all, of lack of comprehension of what Russian art really is may be seen in the fact, that, in a very recent book published both in England and the United States, the paintings exhibited in the Museum of Aleksandr III in Petrograd are condemned *en bloc*! The realistically remarkable landscapes of Shishkin, known and admired by every Russian, are called "insipid"; the magnificent paintings of the Black Sea by Aivassovsky are defined as "chilling"; large canvases by various famous Russian painters of the Russian Past, are said to be "weighted down" with the (beautiful) medieval costumes of tsars and boyars; the paintings of Semiradsky (spelled Semigradsky!) are condemned as huge and lifeless: Vereshchagin is dismissed in a single line as an assertive moralizer; all that magnificence and blaze and poetry of Russian Art contained in the great Petrograd Museum is contemptuously tossed aside as inferior to the collections of foreign painting in the Hermitage, collections of so much less interest and significance to the foreign student of Russian Art, who finds therein, as in Russia's literature and in her music, another and perhaps a richer aspect of the deep, brooding, radiant, mystical Russian Soul.

Or from another viewpoint, in a recent book dealing especially with the individuality of the Russian people by a Professor of Slavic in one of our largest American Universities, I find the extreme iconoclas-

tic view of Tolstoi championed, the rich development of Russian Art reduced to a scant half-dozen names—not all of the most famous; names of men who saw and who see in Russian Art the utilitarian and the didactic alone; the rest entirely ignored on the assumption that all art that does not bind itself to teach the universal brotherhood of man is idle and pernicious, a thing essentially aristocratic, exclusive and corrupt, which should be spurned.

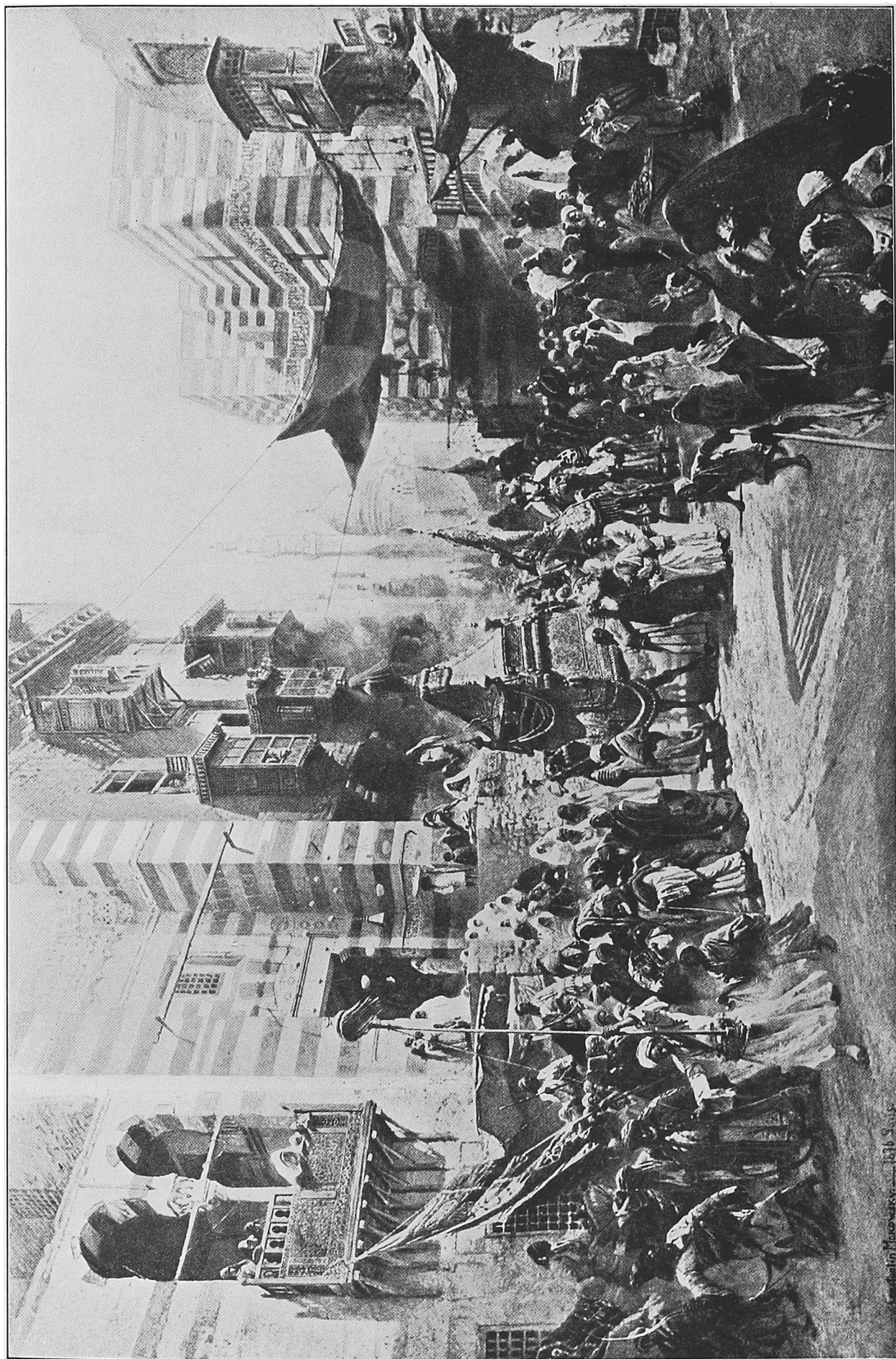
So long as such colossal misconceptions prevail both in Europe and in our own land about the significance and the functions of Russian Art, both of the past and of the present, so long will it be the duty of those who love and admire one of the most brilliantly beautiful and above all the most spiritual artistic creations of the Russian genius to challenge, to defend and to illuminate.

The modern conception of painting is so comprehensive and in Russia so recent¹ that many critics, Russian as well as German, prefer to focus on the strictly modern painters. This method, preëminently in the case of Russia, seems based on an incorrect critical principle; and I believe that it may produce extremely inaccurate and misleading results.

It is said, for instance, that the modern Russian School of Art has absolutely no relation to the Old Russian tradition. This, as will be shown below, is not only psychologically but factively erroneous; and those who hold this wholly arbitrary theory must necessarily remain blind to one of the most important features of modern Russian painting, I mean its obstinate and incurable reversion to the Old Russian religious mood.

What is needed in the study of Russian Art is above all *Synthesis*, the combination of an historical with an interpretative method. The usually isolated facts of the existence of an Old Russian Art of high æsthetic and decorative value, the unmistakable perpetuation of the Byzantine tradition in religious painting; the development of a distinctive Russian style in architecture; the crossing of the Western and the Eastern artistic currents; the almost chem-

¹Note 1.—The history of art is recent in Russia herself. Sergiei Diaghilev, founder of the *Mir Iskusstva*, and that brilliant Russian scholar and painter Igor Grabar, in his projected nine-volume history of Russian art with a thousand illustrations, were pioneers in a new field. Benois did but follow on their tracks.



"THE RETURN OF THE HOLY CARPET, CAIRO," BY K. MAKOPSKY



"TRINITY" BY A. RUBLEV
See page 133



"PRINCESS SUVORIN" BY BOROVIKOVSKY
See page 134

ical effect of the Russian temperament—should be coordinated; thus and thus only may the many misconceptions prevailing in this field be cleared away and relations now obscure stand revealed.

II

How many in our own country know that Russia—old Russia—developed an Art whose products were, by contemporary opinion, put on a level with the creations of the great Italian masters?

It will readily be conceived that any country that starts its artistic life on such a basis must carry within itself some flame of genius, some artistic power destined to create works worthy of immortality.

The taking over by Russia, with the Slavic adoption of Christianity at the turning of the 10th century, of the Byzantine tradition of religious Art and ecclesiastical architecture, is generally known. To say, however, with the celebrated archæologist Viollet-le-Duc, so great an authority on all but Russian phases of his subject, that Russian Art to the end of the 17th century is but a "barbarized" Byzantine art is not only unjust, but untrue.

From earliest times the Russian adaptors have shown a striking capacity of speedy assimilation and an original and distinctive stamp. At first, of course, the Byzantine adaptors were faithful to their source; and certainly the manner endured: even the ikon-painters of the Novgorodian School in the 14th century, who took over the Byzantine tradition, still show a stereotyping of Byzantine detail in frescoes of the prophet Elijah, the Day of the Last Judgment, depictions of the Novgorodian ecclesiastics at prayer, etc. A similar stereotypation is found in the Old Italian art of the same period, which proves, of course, only a common origin. Some of the Novgorod drawings, too, as in the celebrated *Δηεσις* (prayer) are bad, but a similar lack of perspective and proportion is found in the Byzantine originals, and as far as the "barbarizing" is concerned, it suffices to point to the already mentioned Andrei Rubliev* who died in 1430, and who in his one extant ikon-painting "Trinity"† now in the Troiza-Sergius Cloister near Moscow, attained with the expression of an intense religious mood such loveliness of color, such a "heavenly purity," that his contemporaries named him the Russian Fra Beato Angelico—exalted praise truly for a mere dauber in barbarized Byzantine art! And Rubliev founded a school: the anonymous *Δηεσις*, mentioned above, and which shows Christ seated between the Virgin and John the Baptist, tho' inferior in drawing—is quite in Rubliev's manner: it is found in all Russian churches of to-day.

The 15th century saw the apogee and the decline of the Novgorod religious painting. In the Beheading of St. John, we note the conscious "parallelism" (in this case in the coordinated slant of the executioner's sword and the back of the kneeling prophet), which is a symbol of too much stereotyping and of decay.

Moscow, which inherited the artistic tradition thus established after the fall of the Novgorodian Republic, contributes a new ascetic note; a note characteristic of the whole Muscovite period. One of the heads of Christ of this period is dark, sombre, austere: a manner so strikingly different from the mild symphonic mysticism of the Novgorod treat-

ment that it forces itself insistently on the attention. That it marks a retrogression and not an advance is obvious: with it is combined a deterioration in drawing and a loss of color which spell unmistakably decadence.

But [on the principle that retrogressions bring progressions] this new austere manner induces the inevitable reaction, and in the ikon-painting of the Moscow period there begins a Renaissance. This Renaissance centres about the Stroganov School, which returns to that fondness of color that was Novgorodian, and manifests a graphical perfection of outline that Novgorod never knew.

Here for the first time appears that typically Russian love for pure decoration which has persisted to the present; the tendency that makes the most recent Russian School of painting what it is to-day. Is this similarity accidental, and should it be left unrelated: this love and predilection at a distance of four centuries for rich ornamentation, for costly jewels, for fine creations of the goldsmith's art, for miniature exquisiteness and perfection, for Byzantine color enamellings? I remember one 16th century ikon of the later Moscow School, depicting John the Baptist; the hair-garment of him who cried unto the wilderness is made all of gleaming golden threads: the Jordan landscape shines with the opaline resplendency of mother-of-pearl, the whole picture is richly and exquisitely ornamental.

So in the painting of Saints Vassili and Artemi [Moscow School of the 17th century] we find the same purely ornamental handling of landscape and background.

This manner which, though overelaborate and quintessentialized, is beautiful, wherever found, is replaced by a new manner, which is destined to become a fixed and unchanging canon, a crystallization of what had been a freely flowing stream.

In the 17th century, after the final overthrow of Novgorod, there came clerics from the Ukraine‡ bearing holy books and images impregnated with Western European artistic traditions. The Ukraine, through the Roman Catholic Poles, had long been in contact with these traditions. The introduction of this new manner was destined to be momentous. The spirit of old Russian Conservatism rose up in revolt against these Lutheran and Latin abominations; against the sensualism and fleshliness of the imported and alien Art. "Not only to be prayed to," exclaimed Pope Abbakum—"these so-called holy images are unfit even to be looked upon."

Ecclesiastical prohibitions spell the doom of Old Russian religious painting. The reputation of Simon Ashakov, who died near the end of the 17th century, was undoubtedly very much exaggerated. Fresco painting still continued in the Russian province, however, and probably even underwent considerable development in the course of the 17th century. All old Russian churches possess art treasures which modern investigation during the pre-war period was systematically revealing. But officially, the art of ikon-painting was as highly stereotyped as Latin in the time of Cicero. Iconography is checked in its development; the sources of Religious Art are artificially damned up, turned in upon themselves, to stagnate in the marble-margined pool of Byzantine

* Pronounced Rublióff.

† See illustration, page 132.

‡ South Russia.

tradition at the period of the decay. The passionate protests of Joseph Vladimirov to the Serbian Archdeacon Plieschkovich against the obscurantist despotism of the Church were futile, as protests against powerful formalisms usually are; and they were prophetic of the dissolution of a School of Art which was to Russia what the School of Michelangelo and Raphael and Titian are to Italy to-day—a beloved incomparable creation, shining in mild and mystical splendor, to teach, to charm, to uplift, and to illuminate with the glory of an artistic Past.

I have dwelt on the seven centuries of old Russian Art deliberately, for I believe not only that this Byzantine religious tradition was continuous from the 10th to the 17th century, but that it lived on, with but a temporary intermission, into the second great period of Russian Art, the period following that of the violent and unbalanced reforms of Peter, which seemingly closed the door on all that had been Russian thought, life, customs, dress, language, art.

III

Peter was as thoro' as any German. Government, social life, costume, beards, alphabet, liturgical books, art, all must be regulated, controlled and transformed by Western European civilization, which the great Peter blindly adored. That the imperious monarch totally ignored the historical perspective in this universal *bouleversement* was inevitable; that he discounted brutally the poetic beauty of the Old Russian tradition is understandable. Reformers [especially Russian reformers] are insane Extremists, intellectual anarchists, who shrink from no annihilation. And as regards Art, what did Peter know of the sickly pietistic fantasies of the Novgorodian and Moscow mystic School; or care?

One thing is certain. It was through him that the 18th century period of the Reform, the Pseudo-Classicism which means foreign imitation, the Pseudo-Classicism which means artificiality, slavery, stagnation, was ushered in. Dreary is the history of Russian Literature and Russian Art throughout the 18th century! If one judged by the principle of antecedent analogy, one might have expected a rebirth, a renaissance, as in the case of the Stroganov Moscow School, or such as occurred in Russian Classic Architecture at the beginning of the 19th century. Such a revival, however, did not develop, and it is clear that the old Russian School was infinitely superior from every artistic standpoint to anything the 18th century pseudo-classicism produced; there is indeed, absolutely no comparison.

The main explanation may perhaps be found in the lack of rich and powerful personalities. Neither strength nor temperament characterizes the art-ambassadors of Peter: the Nikitins, the Antropovs, the Levitskies, are prettily insipid. Levitsky, it is true, who lived on into the second decade of the 19th century, has been compared to the English painters of his period for a certain grace of portraiture exceptional in Russia at that time. It is not, however, until we come to Borovikovsky that we begin to see anything individual or distinctive, and even this, perhaps, not specifically Russian. His rather sentimental religious paintings in the style of Carlo Dolci had considerable vogue; it is in his Portraits particularly, as, for instance, in his painting of the Comtesses Kurakin or the Princess Suvorin that his

best and most original work appeared. Those deep, soft, dark-velvety eyes, those pale, clear, ivory-toned complexions, those silken curls and curving Oriental mouths impress one pleasingly.

The school, if it have any merit, is estimable in Portraiture alone. In other fields it is as dreary as Pseudo-Classicism ever was, and possesses for us to-day only a historical and a culture-historical interest.

A Classical School, however, soon arises, which offers some relief. To this school belongs Karl Briullov, who shows romantic tendencies (see below) and Count Fiodr Tolstoi, whose long life (1783-1873) touches the history of Russian culture from the time of Pushkin to that of Dostoievsky. Tolstoi's illustrations for classical poems are famous, though it must be said that some of his drawings, as in his *Three Graces*, is as bad as Botticelli's. He had a predilection for interior: some of his wax figures and black-and-white silhouetings possess charm: and it is clear that with Tolstoi the era of modern art in Russia has almost, if not quite, begun.

Briullov, already mentioned above as a Classicist and an important member of this group, I have never been able to find interesting. Briullov was a typical Academicist; full forty-seven paintings from his all too prolific brush hang in the Museum of Aleksandr III alone. His imposing canvas "*The Last Day of Pompeii*" [the usual cataclysmic terror before lightning-flashed skies and falling temples] had a hysterical and ephemeral success of the day: no critic of the present time, Russian or foreign, will sustain such exaggerated claims. Briullov shows a sweetish Romanticism combined with a paralyzing Academicity which touch no responsive chord to-day. Perhaps Briullov—such is the fate of those overlauded by their contemporaries, has been unduly depreciated. Some of his portraits sustain comparison with such painters as Ingres, who had, it must be confessed, infinitely more taste.

IV

At the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century the elements of modern Russian Art are found, and found perfused with a Romantic spirit. They appear in the classic-romantic Kiprensky, a contemporary of Pushkin: an artistic chameleon in whose works reminiscences of Rembrandt, Rubens and other foreign masters constantly recur; but who exhibits [as in his self-portraits] a distinctive temperamental touch; in the similarly temperamental Aleksandr Orlovsky in his spirited sketches of horses and riders; in such painters as K. Briullov, Prince Gagarin, Bruni, Flavitsky, K. Makovsky and Semiradsky.

The saccharine Romanticism of Briullov is found in the colossal works of Makovsky. Briullov was no eagle: Makovsky, despite his faults, was a painter of the greatest talent, whose overpowering splendor of coloring, if it fail of effect, fails by virtue of its very excess. Pascal's dictum that too much of anything is harmful, too much proximity, too great distance; too much sweetness in music [one thinks of Debussy] may be supplemented by the addition—too much color in painting. And yet, need this addition be true? It is not so much a question of coloring as of manner. Makovsky's manner, conditioned by the epoch into which he had the misfor-

tune to be born (the sixties, when the decadence of the Romantic movement was almost consummated, and the new realistic school had not stormed in), may be, and perhaps is, artistically infelicitous judged by the canons of good taste. And yet—that inevitable phrase that comes to the lips when one discusses Russian painting . . . Makovsky in his large canvases, his early Russian scenes, his religious processions and fairs, his “Russian Wedding,”² his “Monks,” his “Return of the Holy Carpet from

Note 2.—Called by the author himself “Gorko,” meaning “bitter.” The explanation lies in the Old Russian conception that the wine of the guests is bitter till the bridegroom kisses the bride.

Cairo” and others, shows a magnificence truly Russian by reason of the very barbarity of its blaze and prodigality of color. Of these pictures both the “Russian Wedding” and the “Monks” have been exhibited in the United States and Canada. Russian critics of the type of Benois, trained in the Western European School, while admitting Makovsky’s great talents, the rich and overpowering splendor of his artistic imagination—a splendor enhanced by this painter’s predilections for subjects drawn from Old Russian life with its gorgeousness of costume and barbaric love of ornamentation, incline rather to depreciation: but I believe that Makovsky’s rich and glowing canvases will stand the test of time.

Francis Hoffine Snow

To be continued

THE AMERICAN PLAYGOER AND THE AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHT

By PROFESSOR BRANDER MATTHEWS, Columbia University

OF all the theorists of the theater in the nineteenth century no one had a broader or a deeper insight into the conditions under which every playwright has to do his work than Francisque Sarcey; and it is to him that we owe the clearest statement of the fact that the most important of these conditions are the playgoers for whom the dramatist destines his play. Sarcey went so far as to declare that all the principles of playmaking could be deduced from a study of the spectators, of their desires (conscious and unconscious), of their needs, of their opinions and of their prejudices. As the playwright has to interest, to hold and to move the playgoers, he must discover the means whereby they may be moved and interested.

The drama differs from every other form of literature (except oratory) in that it is intended, not for the solitary reader in the library, not for man as an individual, but for spectators assembled in the theater, for men in the mass; and all the problems of playmaking, all the technical difficulties of exposition, contrast, construction, climax and solution, are due to the necessity of taking thought about the crowd before whom the play is to be performed and by whom it is to be judged without possibility of appeal.

While it is Sarcey who first amply expounded this doctrine, it had been uttered more or less incompletely by many of his predecessors in criticism. Wordsworth, for example, had asserted that “the poet writes under one restriction only, namely, that of the necessity of giving immediate pleasure.” More than a century earlier, in his first examination of the rules which were then believed to govern dramatic art, Corneille had admitted that “the sole aim of dramatic poetry is to please the spectators.” Nor did it take great courage for the French dramatist to make this admission, even after the controversy over the “Cid,” since he was but echoing Castelvetro. And this Italian critic, in his turn, believed that he was only interpreting the opinion of Aristotle.

In his illuminating study of “Modern French Criticism,” Professor Irving Babbitt called attention to Rousseau’s shrewd remark (in his famous “Letter to D’Alembert”) that the dramatist is not free to choose his problem but has it imposed upon him by the taste of his country and of his time; an audience in Messina enjoying a tale of vengeance and an audience in Tunis sympathizing with a story of piracy. Rousseau, following Saint-Evremond, went so far as to suggest that the “*Cedipus the King*” of Sophokles did not originally succeed because of its absolute human appeal but because it expressed the taste of an Athenian audience of the fifth century B. C. Here both of the Frenchmen overstate or misstate their case. “*Cedipus*” succeeded originally because its absolute human appeal was in accord with the taste of the Athenian audience. And Professor Babbitt is himself misleading in his comment that “Saint-Evremond and Rousseau would seem to have been convicted of error by recent successful revivals of ‘*Cedipus*’ as an acting play.”

At its first performance “*Cedipus*” was immediately popular with the citizens of Athens, whereas no one of the recent revivals can fairly be called popular; those in Greek were both academic and sporadic, and that in French owed its temporary vogue to the superb acting of Mounet-Sully, which attracted audiences not at all in sympathy with the remote and abhorrent theme of the Attic tragedy.

That Saint-Evremond and Rousseau had laid hold of a sound theory is likely to be disputed by no one who is familiar with Le Bon’s stimulating study of the “Psychology of the Crowd” or who has followed the subsequent discussion of the mental and moral characteristics of a theatrical audience, undertaken by Mr. William Archer, Mr. A. B. Walkley and Mr. Clayton Hamilton. In the course of this protracted debate attention has been called to more than one point which the merely literary critics of the drama are likely to overlook. In the first place few or no themes are really universal and perennial; and plots which delighted the ancient Greeks may find the